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The Original Identity of the York and Towneley Cycles. By MARIE C. LYLE. [Research Publications of the University of Minnesota, vol. VIII, No. 3.] Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1919.

This dissertation, the most notable contribution in recent years to the study of the relations between the York and Towneley cycles, presents in admirable form a most plausible solution of that problem. Discarding as inadequate former attempts to account for the more obvious likenesses between these cycles, Miss Lyle bases her deductions not only on the similarities noted by others and additional similarities which she herself points out, but also upon the dissimilarities generally recognized tho less generally considered in this connection.

In her analyses of the individual plays she distinguishes six different groups: (1) plays that are practically identical; (2), (3), (4) plays showing various degrees of similarity in structure and phraseology; (5), (6) plays showing no direct evidence of relationship. This classification does not coincide in detail with that proposed in any previous discussion of the subject, and in its application many more points of contact between the cycles are revealed than have been admitted by such scholars as Hohlfeld, Davidson, Pollard, Gayley, and Cady. Proceeding, however, from the hypothesis that the identical plays of the first group constitute the nucleus of a parent cycle, or common source from which both the York and Towneley cycles derive, the author discovers in her second, third, and fourth groups plays likewise derived from this common source but of which the origin, because of revisions differing in nature and extent in each cycle, has been obscured. The presence of these revisions is for the most part postulated in conformity with such objective criteria as are afforded by metrical tests, Burton's lists, and the *York Memorandum Book*;¹ and the absence of certain plays from each cycle is similarly interpreted.

¹ Additional confirmation for a few conjectures might have been derived from these sources. The conclusion (p. 72) that the present prolog to the York *Annunciation* is a revision is supported by the fact that the reference to it in Burton's earlier list is an interlinear addition. Similarly, the assumption (p. 59) that the earlier York play of the *Magi* lacked the character of Herod's son is strengthened by the fact that the words "filius herodis" in Burton's description are added in another ink.

Miss Lyle accordingly concludes that "at an earlier period, the York cycle and the Towneley cycles were, as cycles, one and the same."

It is manifest at once that Miss Lyle's parent cycle, unlike Davidson's, pretends to no uniformity in style or verse structure. The presence in it of plays containing at least four different measures—and possibly more (p. 51)—suggests that the common source of the York and Towneley cycles had suffered considerable change before it became independently established in two separate communities. Gayley thought several of the plays in this group decidedly late in date; Miss Lyle is of the opinion that the separation of the cycles "occurred before the end of the fourteenth century, . . . at least before the year 1390." No formal attempt is made to determine the chronological order of the metres in the parent cycle, but the *rime couée* is conjectured to be earlier than the "Burns" measure (p. 67), which, as well as the couplets and quatrains of the Towneley cycle, would seem to antedate the northern septenar stanza. The latter is analyzed in the light of the influence, both textual and metrical, exerted by the Middle-English *Gospel of Nicodemus*, and the conclusion is reached that the plays written in this metre are not to be identified with the earliest strata of the parent cycle, as has been quite generally assumed, but with revisions made just before, and at York also after, the divergence of the York and Towneley branches from their common stem. Some of the plays composed in the northern septenar stanza, therefore, are assigned by Miss Lyle to the parent cycle while others are believed by her to have been revised after the separation.

In the examination of the individual plays a valiant attempt is made in every case to determine which of the two cycles preserves a version more nearly resembling that of the hypothetical original. The evidence is excellently assembled and keenly scrutinized but satisfactory results, as the author herself recognizes, are often unattainable. It seems unlikely, however, that the parent play on the *Massacre of the Innocents* is "now extant presumably in York" (p. 65), since Burton knew *iiij* *milites* and *iiij* *mulieres*, whereas only two soldiers and two women appear at present.² Critics may

² The play also is metrically unique and stylistically late. That "the presence of 'Burns' strophes in the Towneley play [T 26, the *Appearance*

also be inclined to differ with Miss Lyle in the case of several plays where she posits expansion in one cycle rather than contraction in the other; or division into separate plays on the one hand, rather than combination into a single play on the other. These are matters of detail, however, that in no way affect her principal conclusions, and in the main her inferences in this difficult part of her work appear to be sound and well documented.³

The probability that the two cycles have emanated, at least in large part, from a common vernacular original is increased by the results of Miss Lyle's study of the influence of the *Northern Passion* upon the parent cycle.⁴ Her chart shows that the similarities between the plays and this narrative poem are due not to their independent use of it, but to the existence of a common source based upon the poem. It will be found that this conclusion is supported by a recently discovered fourteenth century manuscript of an Old French Passion play,⁵ much of which is verbally identical with the Old French narrative poem on the subject (the source of the *Northern Passion*) and the relation of which to the two fifteenth century manuscripts described by M. Roy (*Le Mystère de la Passion*, pp. 40* ff.) is to be explained by the fact that all three versions are affiliated with a common original derived from the narrative poem.⁶

scene] identifies it as perhaps a part of the parent cycle" (p. 85) is equally uncertain. The irregularity of the metre (there are six different stanzas in a total of only eleven) and the fact that the changes in the metrical structure of the entire Towneley *Resurrection* occur at the points where agreement with the York play ceases suggest revision there as well as at York.

³ One or two minor inaccuracies have been noted. On page 31 it is assumed that the fourth incident in York 30 does not occur in the *Northern Passion*; cf. ll. 1061 ff. P. 72, note 46; Hemingway considers the parallel in the York cycle briefly on page 264. P. 90; York 12, ll. 197-9, are hardly an "inquiry concerning the relatives."

⁴ The reader should not be misled by the statement on page 4 that the *Northern Passion* is an "immediate" (cf. "fundamental," p. 30) source of the two cycles. Elsewhere (p. 29) Miss Lyle makes it apparent that that rôle must be reserved for the parent cycle.

⁵ It is now being edited.

⁶ Miss Lyle might perhaps have established the dependence of her parent cycle upon another vernacular source by including the *Cursor Mundi* in her comparisons. Parallels between York, Towneley and the Cotton manuscript insertion (EETS edition, Part III, pp. 985 ff.) are at least suggestive. Cf.

It is to be hoped that Miss Lyle will extend her researches to the other cycles. At present the fact that her comparisons are almost exclusively confined to the York and Towneley plays leaves unanswered a number of questions which arise in connection with the problem in its wider aspects. Conceivably it may be found that subsequent revisions have obscured the original relationship existing between single plays, or groups of plays, in two or more cycles, and that in such circumstances the identity not of entire cycles but merely of parts of cycles need be posited. In any case various resemblances between the York, Towneley, true-Coventry, Chester and Hegge plays obviously of non-liturgical origin—the presence of parts of the *Doctors* in at least four of the cycles, for example—still await a satisfactory explanation.

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Dramatic Technique. By George Pierce Baker. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1919.

Professor Baker's *Dramatic Technique* is written "for the person who cannot be content except when writing plays." It concerns itself only incidentally with historical surveys and critical analyses, making its chief aim to state and explain certain fundamental principles of dramatic technique in terms that can be understood by the novice. Compared with various short handbooks on play-making, this volume stands out for its thoro treatment of perplexing problems and its admirable freedom from dogmatic statement.

The method of procedure is largely inductive. If he wishes to explain, for instance, how to make dramatic exposition at once clear and interesting, Professor Baker does not dictate arbitrary rules to be followed by the novice. Realizing that such an art as writing plays has only a few binding rules but a great many gen-

C. M. lines 232*-5* with *York* 39, ll. 39-41, and *Towneley* 26, ll. 563-8; cf. *C. M.* ll. 242*-4* with *Y.* ll. 82-5 and *T.* ll. 592-4; cf. *C. M.* ll. 331*-6* with *Y.* 40, ll. 67-9, and *T.* 27, ll. 98-9, 102-3; cf. *C. M.* ll. 339*-44* with *Y.* ll. 70-2, and *T.* ll. 118-21, 130; cf. *C. M.* ll. 347*-50*, with *T.* ll. 136-9; cf. *C. M.* ll. 355*-7*, with *Y.* ll. 110-2; cf. *C. M.* ll. 359*-66*, with *Y.* ll. 114-20, and *T.* ll. 183-8; cf. *C. M.* ll. 367*-70*, with *Y.* ll. 123-4, and *T.* ll. 195-6; cf. *C. M.* ll. 393*-6*, with *Y.* ll. 144-7, and *T.* ll. 251-4.